

March 25, 2005

**BATH COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT
FACILITIES HEARING REPORT**

A State Board public hearing was held at the Bath County School Board Office on Thursday, March 24, 2005, at 5:30 P.M. (local time). The purpose of the public hearing was to propose a new District Facility Plan (DFP) developed by the Bath County Local Planning Committee. The Local Planning Committee (LPC) voted 9-1 in favor of the proposed new plan and the Board voted 4-1 to approve the new plan.

There were thirty (30) individuals in attendance. Timothy Lucas, Division of Facilities Management, served as the State-appointed hearing officer. Nancy Hutchinson, Superintendent, board members, local planning committee members, district staff, concerned citizens and local media representatives were present.

COMMENTS

Superintendent Hutchinson called the public hearing to order and welcomed those in attendance. The hearing officer outlined the purpose of the hearing and the hearing procedures in accordance with 702 KAR 1:001. A copy of the hearing agenda was presented to those in attendance. It was explained that those persons wishing to speak would be given the opportunity, and written statements would be accepted. It was also noted all considerations will be made available to the Kentucky Board of Education via the hearing officer's report.

A brief history of the Plan's development that had been prepared by Ross-Tarrant Architects was reviewed. (Following the hearing it was noted that the final Bath County School Board vote had been incorrectly noted as 5-0 instead of the actual 4-1 vote and the KDE meeting noted on 9-20-04, was actually held on 11/20/04.) The first Plan presented by the District went through the hearing process, with a State Board Hearing being held on December 1, 2004. In that hearing, testimony was given that indicated the District may qualify for an Urgent Needs Grant to replace Bethel and Salt Lick Elementary Schools, but the Plan presented at that time would preclude this since both schools were noted to remain permanent centers and be renovated. The Bath County School Board rejected the hearing officer's report with the specific direction to the LPC to consider making Bethel and Salt Lick transitional centers and creating a first priority to replace both buildings with a single new facility. The LPC revised the Plan and resubmitted it to the Local Board with the vote being as noted in the first paragraph above.

The entire Proposed District Facilities Plan was read into the record. The hearing officer noted that the proposed Plan calls for a current P-4, 5-8, 9-12 school organization structure with a change to a P-5, 6-8, 9-12. The Plan proposes that Bethel and Salt Lick Elementary Schools become transitional centers to be replaced by a new 450-student elementary school, major renovation and additions to the Owingsville Elementary School, the Bath County High School and the Bath County Middle School. The Plan also proposes the construction of a new Central Office and Bus Garage.

The floor was opened to those who wished to make a statement; a series of petitions bearing seven hundred and eleven (711) names were presented to the hearing officer. The petitions have not been reviewed for duplicate names. Copies of these documents are on file at the Division of Facilities Management.

Twelve (12) persons made statements to those present. The hearing officer noted the essence of each speaker's statements. In general the speakers expressed concern over the proposed closing of the Bethel and Salt Lick Elementary Schools. They noted the relocation of the students away from their home area and the removal from what they perceive to be a fine school. They expressed concern over losing their community schools and the change from small schools where the teachers can provide special attention to each student to large schools. Several expressed concern that the change was being forced on the district by the Department of Education. A copy of this document is on file at the Division of Facilities Management.

The hearing officer then outlined to the group the next steps that would be undertaken in the process.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the new District Facility Plan developed by the Bath County local planning committee and adopted by the Bath County Board of Education be approved as the Facility Plan for the Bath County School District. A copy of the new plan is attached.

Respectfully submitted,

Timothy K. Lucas, Hearing Officer

c: Mark W. Ryles, Director
Bath County new District Facility Plan File/Copy